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ABSTRACT

The development of a philosophy of marketing for a public community college requires an understanding of the various marketing strategies, a knowledge of the needs of the clientele to be served, and a clear understanding of the operational philosophy of the institution. At Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), the marketing philosophy rests upon: (1) the involvement of all personnel in the organization led by a functional director and a small staff; (2) a vision of the school as a fully responsible organization meeting the needs of its community; (3) a pricing program reflecting state contributions and local support; and (4) a balanced marketing approach to obtain optimum satisfaction of the target market. Motivational/marketing strategies employed by BHCC are structured to reflect the characteristics and motivational bases of participation. Some of the more important strategies include working with business and industry to provide upgrading and retraining for blue collar workers; teaching in a variety of instructional modes for older adults and those of lower socio-economic status; involving adults in the planning, organization, and implementation of the curricula; utilizing personal contacts as a means of disseminating information on programs to low-income workers; and utilizing media for recruitment of white collar workers. In arriving at fees for its continuing education offerings, BHCC utilizes a model which is based on concepts of variable and fixed costs, with the variable costs being a function of student semester hours. (Author/EJV)

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MARKETING CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE PUBLIC-SUPPORTED COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

MARKETING CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS
IN THE PUBLIC-SUPPORTED COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Barbara F. Ash

The development of a philosophy of marketing for a public supported community college requires the following prerequisites: (1) an understanding of the various marketing strategies; (2) a knowledge of the needs of the clientele to be served; and (3) a clear understanding of the operational philosophy of the institution. The marketing philosophy of a public supported community college consists of:

- A function of all personnel in the organization designated by a functional director and a small staff.
- A fully responsible organization which meets the needs of the community it serves.
- A pricing program which reflects the contribution of the state and the support of the local community.
- A balanced marketing approach to obtain optimum satisfaction of the target market as well as a high degree of product adoption.

Motivational/marketing strategies employed by the institution should be structured to reflect the characteristics and motivational bases of participation. Some of the more important marketing strategies include.

- Working with business and industry to provide upgrading and retraining for blue collar workers by negotiating day-release time for educational purposes.
- For older adults and those of lower socio-economic status, teaching courses in a variety of instructional modes.
- Involving adults in the program planning, organization, and implementation of the curricula.
- Utilizing personal contact as a means of getting information on programs to low-income workers; utilizing media for the recruitment of white collar workers.

Few concrete guidelines exist for arriving at fees for continuing education programs. The process is complex, and there is no exact formula. The objective to be achieved by the institution is a determing factor when setting fees. The model for tuition pricing presented in this report prices programs for a special audience of part-time community college students enrolled in the day division. The programs are both funded and fee supported. A pricing formula was developed based on concepts of variable and fixed costs; the variable costs being a function of student semester hours.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction. 1

Marketing Continuing Education Programs--An Overview. 1

The Philosophy and Goals of Bunker Hill Community College 6

Marketing Philosophy for a Public Community College 9

Motivational-Marketing Strategies 10

Formula for Tuition Pricing 14

Bibliography. 19

INTRODUCTION

This paper will provide the background for the development of an innovative marketing program for part-time students in a public supported community college. Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, Massachusetts, will be used as the model in this report. The following assumptions have been made in undertaking this project:

- A needs assessment project was undertaken prior to the opening of Bunker Hill Community College in 1973.
- The goals of Bunker Hill Community College have been refined as time and circumstances have demanded. A current operational philosophy of the College exists.
- Programmatic thrusts for the College have been developed based on recent needs data.
- The motivational bases of participation and the characteristics and participation patterns of adult learners were researched by this author prior to the development of the marketing-motivational strategies presented in this report. References are included in the bibliography.

This paper will be divided into the following sections:

- Marketing Continuing Education Programs--An Overview
- The Philosophy and Goals of Bunker Hill Community College
- Marketing Philosophy for a Public Community College
- Motivational-Marketing Strategies
- Formula for Tuition Pricing
- Bibliography

MARKETING CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

IN THE PUBLIC SUPPORTED COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Marketing Continuing Education Programs--An Overview

The marketing of educational programs has become a "serious business." In the not-too-distant past, when classrooms were full of students, the marketing of college programs was unnecessary. Educational institutions considered marketing to be something less than respectable. Many thought of it as a form of hucksterism. Recently, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. A number of factors are responsible for this recently aroused interest in marketing.

> Three developments can be cited as being principally responsible: an unstable, inflationary economy; the rise in the demand for non-credit education; and the increasing competition for the continuing education audience. During a time of economic uncertainty, the educational dollar is expended more cautiously. Educational appetites, especially in the adult education sector, become more selective, refined, and insistent upon quality. (36:35)

The increasing competition for the continuing education audience is healthy, and it places a new burden for quality education on those institutions offering academic programs. On the other hand, quality programs will no longer ensure a full classroom of students. Lenz asserts:

> It is no longer safe to assume that providing a course, a classroom, and teacher will automatically bring students to the door. There are too many doors available to them. "How," pleads the hard-pressed continuing educator, "can I bring them to mine?" The answer presents itself in the form of better, more effective methods of communication (perhaps a more acceptable term in academia than "marketing"). (36:36)

The trend, however, toward marketing the "in thing" and "keeping up with the Jones" should be tempered, as "continuing education requires a learning environment that offers continuity and substance and that is identified with reliability and academic integrity." (36:37)

More effective methods of communication appear to be the answer to this dilemma. Lenz believes:

> . . .it comes down to using some of the tools of Madison Avenue, those tried and tested strategies that, as the marketing experts insist, are the best means we have for bringing together the learner and the provider of learning. (36:36)

A review of pertinent literature on the topic of marketing continuing education programs pinpoints numerous concerns for the adult educator. Of paramount importance is an understanding of marketing practice. It is clear that an understanding of the elements of marketing practice and their relationship to continuing education is helpful in the structuring of a marketing philosophy. Conversely, effective marketing practices relate to the understanding of and the commitment to a marketing philosophy. According to Berry:

> Those involved in continuing education must be aware that marketing extends beyond just profit-oriented business firms, and they must acknowledge the importance of using marketing effectively. Marketing in itself is unavoidable for the organization that intends to perform continuing education, but in the face of expanding adult educational markets and resulting heavy competition, the effective practice of marketing is also essential. (7:8)

It seems obvious that an understanding of the marketing principles and a plan for marketing continuing education programs are essential for the effective use of resources and for program development and implementation.

Another concern for the continuing educator is the relationship between programming and marketing. Any marketing plan for an institution

must consider programming. "Programming and marketing are so closely intertwined and interdependent that it is difficult to find where one leaves off and the other begins." (36:35)

Lenz continues:

> What is needed is for the profession to develop a heightened awareness of the meaning and potential of the marketing concept. This is the view of marketing as transactions conducted by individuals and institutions for the purpose of serving human interests and wants. From this perspective, marketing and programming are inextricably intertwined. (36:35)

Thus, those involved in the marketing of institutional programs must also be involved in their development, and, conversely, program developers must also be involved with marketing. "Successful marketing of continuing education involves, essentially, two things: (1) that marketing not be confused with selling--marketing is a philosophy, selling is an activity; and (2) that continuing educators keep their sights firmly fixed on the interests and concerns of the people they serve." (36:38)

A consideration of the audience to be served is essential in the development both of programs and of marketing strategies. Programs for special audiences, such as those enrolled in a comprehensive community college, may be unique. A comprehensive community college provides programs for all students, regardless of sex, social class, race, or degree of success in previous academic endeavors. The needs of the high-risk, marginal, or educationally disadvantaged student may be quite different from those of a general audience. According to Farlow:

> A major rule in publicizing continuing education programs is to have something to offer which is clearly defined--and to have a distinctly identified audience to whom it will appeal. (21:22-23)

The programming for a general audience--an audience "made up, for the most part, of voluntary learners who are seeking to relate what they learn to their own needs. . .emphasizes learning rather than teaching." (36:46)

The nature of the audience will determine to a large degree the design and delivery of a program--and, ultimately, the price. These differences are noted in the following table. (36:92)

General Audience	Special Audience
Diffuse	Contained
Fluctuating	Steady
Diverse interests	*Focused interest
Ambivalent goals	*Defined goals
Mainly voluntary	Frequently involuntary
Usually fee supported	*Both fee and subsidy supported

*Sometimes lacking in community college students

Advisory committees, professionals, and organizations which represent the audience served may have a hand in curriculum development for the "special audience." For this population, "marketing is a relatively low-key activity that takes place with delimited boundaries." (36:92) The community college serving the special audience uses an informational approach to marketing. This approach is an attempt to make the information available in an articulate and understanding way. Taking advantage of radio and television for informational sessions is an example. The community college may build information programs around very specific audiences. The key is timing--knowing when to offer certain kinds of programs.

For the most part, the community college is concerned with local marketing, directed toward meeting individual and community needs rather th the needs of the college. "A private college has programs which it markets; a community college is more involved with community service." (50)

Programming is another factor which distinguishes the special audience from the general audience. This also affects marketing. Lenz asserts:

> Programming for special audiences lacks some of the "glamour" of the general audience variety. It is a more purposeful process in which achieving goals and establishing and maintaining standards take precedence over imaginative formats and charismatic delivery. (36:92)

Another concern for the continuing educator is the approach to be used in the marketing of programs. Traditionally, education has used a "soft sell" approach. "The soft sell concept is, 'Why should we have to sell a worthwhile service?'" (53:8)

With increased competition for the continuing education audience, a more liberal approach to marketing educational programs may be appropriate. This "middle of the road" approach lies somewhere between the "hard sell" associated with business and industry and the "soft sell" familiar to educators. Smith outlines this approach:

> Balanced marketing seeks to blend effectively all elements of the marketing mix in a way to maximize product adoption and consumer satisfaction. Balanced marketing meets the tastes and needs of most institutions. (53:7)

Of final concern to the continuing educator is an undertanding of the various marketing strategies. A brief outline of these marketing elements follows:

- Product Strategy. This includes programming or product decisions. "This is the need you are actually filling." (21:20) Courses and curriculum must be developed.

- Place Strategy. Decisions must be made as to the most appropriate distribution of the product (programs or courses). "Proximity of market to. . .location can be a liability or an asset, depending on the market segment." (21:20) This involves deciding where classes or porgrams should be held.

- Promotion Strategy. This includes advertising and promoting the various programs. Communication decisions are germain to this strategy. This may be described as "the total 'feel' of the experience." (21:20)

- Pricing Strategy. This includes assessing program costs and determining tuition and fee charges. "This affects the credibility of the product." (21:20)

Kotler summarizes marketing for non-profit organizations with the following definition:

> Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of the target markets' needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets. (34:5)

In conclusion, effective marketing requires an institution to research and understand the needs of potential clients; to design the programs to meet students needs; to communicate the programs, curriculum, and course offerings effectively; and to present the programs in an appropriate place under timely circumstances.

The concerns discussed above are important prerequisites to the development of a marketing philosophy designed to fit the needs and the operational philosophy of a given institution.

The Philosophy and Goals of Bunker Hill Community College

The following paragraph provides a general description of Bunker Hill Community College (51:1)

Bunker Hill Community College is an institution of higher education that offers associate degrees in arts and in sciences. The College serves

an area that includes but is not limited to the cities of Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Revere, and Somerville. The College is accessible by public transportation. Bunker Hill supports the underlying beliefs that the community college has the potential to contribute to the improvement of society; that the community college must aid in opening the door of opportunity to all sectors of American life; that the college community must have an impact on the quality of life and on the environment.

The specific philosophy of Bunker Hill Community College follows:

1. To provide access to higher education for Commonwealth students, regardless of age, sex, race, economic background, or handicap;

2. To provide a variety of day and evening programs that meet the needs of a student body with diverse educational backgrounds and career expectations;

3. To support institutional adaptation and change in anticipation of and response to the needs of a rapidly changing environment;

4. To offer course content in a variety of instructional modes to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles;

5. To encourage continuing faculty and staff development;

6. To provide a comprehensive program of student support services;

7. To design, develop, and administer highly personalized approaches to higher education, using College and community resources;

8. To provide programs of individualized instruction that rely on the resources of a Learning Center, a flexible learning contract option, credit for life experience, credit by examination, and community-based courses and programs;

9. To continue to integrate all aspects of the College: occupational programs with general education; continuing education with full- and part-time day programs; on-campus programs with off-campus programs;

10. To cooperate with community agencies, business, and industry in providing a broad range of educational services that meet their needs.

The institution is committed to an open admissions program in order to provide access to higher education for individuals within the Commonwealth. The College is concerned with providing resources for the non-traditional student, the uniquely talented, the older student, the part-time student, the educationally disadvantaged student, and the student eligible for advanced placement.

The goals of the institution focus on two areas:

1. The development of programs and curricula that will best meet the needs of students, and the order of priority in which these programs will be implemented.

2. The development of varied instructional methods that will accommodate a student population that ranges extensively in age and educational background.

In 1975, Bunker Hill Community College established a five-year educational plan. Since 1975, as a result of budget restrictions and technological change, program priorities and timetables have been revised. Regarding operational philosophies, Eastmond makes the following comment:

> An operational philosophy of education should be a dynamic, practical instrument that is used periodically or continuously for making decisions on school matters at all organizational levels and by all personnel. (19:20)

Evans and Neagley concur:

> The process of developing and revising institutional philosophy and objectives should be ongoing, reflecting changing values and needs in society. (20:96)

Grabowski recommends the "value bank" concept of an operational philosophy:

> . . .dynamic "value banks" must replace the "once-per-decade" officially adopted statements of educational philosophy. That is, "value banks" must be adopted if there is to be a basis for sound educational policies and decisions. (25:14)

Since the development of the initial five-year plan at Bunker Hill Community College, a process of goal-setting for each individual year has been established. Through this process, which involves all levels of administration, as well as members of the faculty and students who wish to become involved, the objectives of this institution are reviewed. While the College's objectives have remained stable, the degree to which each objective is emphasized varies from year to year and relates directly to budget and community needs. The College Advisory Board, civic groups, business and industry, and citizens of the community are helpful in this process.

Marketing Philosophy for a Public Community College

The following is the marketing philosophy of a public supported community college (Bunker Hill Community College, the model used in this report).

- The marketing at Bunker Hill Community College (a non-profit institution) will be a function of all personnel in the organization designated by a functional director and a small staff.

- Bunker Hill Community College will be a fully responsible organization which meets the needs of the community it serves. In order to do this, the College will:

  1. Research the preferences, needs and satisfaction of its clientele at regular intervals and design programs to meet students' needs.

  2. Involve the faculty and personnel of the College in the process of developing and revising the operational philosophy and objectives of the institution to reflect the changing values and needs of the community being served.

3. Encourage its public constituents to participate actively in the affairs of the College and to solicit opinions, suggestions, and complaints through formal and informal channels.

4. Use an informational approach to communicate the course offerings and programs effectively and to present them in a good place under timely circumstances.

- As a non-profit institution, Bunker Hill Community College will price its programs to reflect the contribution of the State of Massachusetts and the support of the local community. Costs will be kept in a range which is affordable to a broad segment of the public in order that they will be able to take advantage of the educational offerings.
- A balanced marketing approach will be used to obtain the optimum satisfaction of the target market (student) as well as a high degree of product adoption (courses selected and persons enrolled in the program).

Motivational-Marketing Strategies

The following strategies are recommended in order to market programs effectively for the community college model used for this report. When research provided insights for these strategies, the author or authors are noted in parentheses.

- The College should work with business, industry, and labor groups (organizations in which potential students have ties) to provide upgrading and retraining for blue collar workers by negotiating day-release time for educational purposes. (37)
- For older adults and those of lower socio-economic status, courses taught in a variety of instructional modes to accommodate a range of interests and learning styles should be provided. (8)

- Courses broken down into modules of ten or fewer sessions each meeting once a week should be designed. (16, 55)

- Cooperative education programs for young adults--programs in which students attend classes during the first half of the day and work during the second half of the day--should be offered. (37)

- Where applicable, adults should be involved in the program planning, organization, and implementation of the curricula. (17, 37, 39)

- Programs to incorporate more informal interaction between the instructor and the students in order to narrow the instructor-learner social distance should be designed. (35)

- The College should work closely with people in organizations with which they already have ties, (e.g., clubs or churches) or should create an organization which would attract those of lower socio-economic status and subsequently create ties. (17)

- Personal contact as a means of getting information on programs to low-income workers should be employed. For example, a day or evening open house for the friends and family of present students would provide an informal, social setting for their obtaining information about courses and programs. (37)

- Media for recruitment of white collar workers should be utilized. For example, flyers, brochures, radio, and television could be used during a recruitment campaign. Grocery stores might place announcements in customers' bags; announcements could be placed on car windshields in busy parking lots; high school or college students could hand out literature in shopping centers; a sound truck might be employed; or announcements could be placed on community bulletin boards. (37)

- The social aspects of programs could be incorporated into the advertising and promotion of the programs. This is particularly important for the elderly who are desirous of social interaction. (36)

- A soft-sell approach to the marketing of programs for women should be employed, as the needs of housewives differ from those of blue-collar workers. (36)

- Inter-agency linkages with community action groups should be further developed. These agencies, already serving the target population, can prove to be good sources for attracting students. (37)

- A program emphasizing work-study opportunities, career training, and transfer opportunities, to recruit students from area high schools, should be developed. Personal canvassing or face-to-face contact with the target population should be the method used for recruiting.

- An instrument for regularly evaluating courses and programs should be developed.

- Courses should be geared to professionals by offering information on future trends and advances in the profession. (36, 37)

- The college must be equipped with separate telephones or extensions for the purpose of providing direct information to callers concerning courses and programs. Requested flyers, brochures, and catalogs must be mailed within 24 hours.

- Programs for the elderly should be scheduled during the day and in easily accessible places. (36)

- Programs for the elderly that are non-competitive, non-threatening in nature and which restore their ability to learn must be designed. (2, 36, 44)

- Programs for the middle-aged woman and older adult that tap a deep interest or concern should be designed. (28)

- A wide range of independent learning programs for those in lower-economic groups should be offered. (8, 28)

- Women not presently in the workforce should be recruited through workshops and seminars geared to those who are changing careers. A women's center could be made available which offers social activities, programs, and resources in an informal atmosphere for those in need of this support service.

- An incentive bonus for present students who recruit a new student to the program could be offered. For example, a $10 education voucher or an MBTA pass (free one-month ride) would provide a good incentive.

- For those students with little previous formal schooling, marketing efforts could be directed through the public secondary institutions and off-campus community-based programs in those secondary schools could be offered. (31)

- For the lower-economic-class individuals, courses in self-fulfillment or personal growth should be minimized in the marketing efforts as these concepts have little meaning to these individuals. (31)

- Courses and activities through which one learns to adapt to changing conditions for the learning of some new skill (instrumental learning) should be provided as older participants, blue collar workers, and those with less than a college education have a preference toward instrumental programs. (2, 28)

- A course to relate the old to the new by tapping the elderly's long history of experience should be designed. (2)

- Programs for older adults which emphasize learning tasks that require verbal abilities more resistant to decline vs. abstract processing should be marketed. (2)

- An active alumni association should be developed to assist in publicizing current and future programs.

- Free seminars or training workshops which are geared toward women who are changing careers or planning to re-enter the workforce should be sponsored.

- Information relating to transportation and parking should be included in the literature distributed to potential clients, as parking and transportation problems may be barriers to participation.

The importance of effective marketing-motivational strategies cannot be overlooked in any organization. Educational institutions must make the public aware of their course and program offerings and exert special efforts in planning and executing effective marketing strategies at a time when the educational consumer has so many choices.

Formula for Tuition Pricing

There are no concrete guidelines for arriving at fees for continuing education programs. The process is complex, and there is no exact formula. "The question of the proper criteria for pricing in a non-profit organization is a fascinating one on which considerably more work is needed." (34:70) Concerning determining the price of the program or the fee to be charged, Lenz states:

> In continuing education, which appeals to dreams and aspirations as well as to pragmatic needs, irrational elements, as might be expected, play a significant part in the transaction between buyer and seller that moves into gear upon the setting of a price. (36:89)

The type of audience to be served will to some extent determine the tuition to be charged. The price of a program for a general audience, as well as the design and delivery of the program, will be different from that of the special audience. Programs designed to meet the requirements for recertification and relicensure and programs for professionals may require specific considerations not applicable to general or specific audiences. According to Lenz:

> Finding exactly the right price for continuing education programs is a goal worth striving for, but especially in general audience programming, it is a goal that often proves to be elusive. As in virtually all other facets of the programming process, the watchwords are constant diligence and experimentation. (36:89)

Another factor in determining fees is whether or not the program is to be funded by funds other than those derived from tuition. Special audience programs may be both funded and fee programs. General audience programs are more often fee supported.

Grants and contracts provide one source of funding for continuing education programs. The overdependence on soft money can become dangerous, however, as is the case ". . .with individuals and profit-making corporations, continuing education needs diversified sources of income." (36:165)

When pricing educational programs, one must review the potential enrollment, the revenue needs of the institution, and competition from institutions offering similar programs. The objective to be achieved by the institution is a determing factor when setting fees. Kotler states:

> An organization can be guided by any of four different objectives in setting price: profit maximization, cost recovery, market incentivization, and market disincentivization. (34:188)

For the community college model used by this writer, programs will be priced for a special audience of part-time community college students enrolled in the day division. The programs will be both funded and fee supported.

In the Massachusetts Community College System, the tuition for ten or more semester hours (per semester) is $225. A student is considered to be part time when enrolled in nine or fewer semester hours. The rate per credit hour in 1980 was $22.50.

The sponsorship in most community colleges consists of one third of the revenues from the state, one third from the county (local), and one third from student tuition. A non-profit (breakeven) pricing objective will be presented in this model. Two-thirds of the revenue will be derived from sponsorship and one third from tuition. The model and formula for tuition pricing is presented below:

Definitions

X = Price per semester hour for part-time students

P = Average number of part-time student semester hours per student per year

E = Number of part-time students per year

Y = Price per year per full-time student

F = Number of full-time students per year

S = Revenues provided by the state to support the institution

Q = Average number of full-time student semester hours per student per year

VC= Variable costs per student semester hour per year

FC= Fixed costs per year

PR= Profit objective

Pricing Formula for Part-Time Students

TOTAL REVENUES = TOTAL COSTS + PROFIT OBJECTIVE

TOTAL REVENUES = XPE + YF + S

TOTAL COSTS = VC(PE + FQ) + FC

PROFIT OBJECTIVE = PR

THEREFORE: $XPE + YF + S = VC(PE+FQ) + FC + PR$

Example A. Assumptions

P = 12 semester hours per year

E = 900 part-time students per year

Y = $450 per year

F = 1500 full-time students per year

S = 2/3 of the total costs for the year

Q = 30 semester hours per year

VC= $10 per student semester hour

FC= $2,212,500 per year

PR= Breakeven or zero

Example B. Solution

$$XPE + YF + S = VC(PE + FQ) + FC + PR$$

$$XPE + YF + 2/3[VC(PE + FQ) + FC] = VC(PE + FQ) + FC + 0$$

$$X(12{\cdot}900) + \$450(1500) + 2/3[\$10(12{\cdot}900 + 1500{\cdot}30) + \$2,212,500] =$$

$$\$10(12{\cdot}900 + 1500{\cdot}30) + \$2,212,500 + 0$$

$$X10800 + \$675,000 + 2/3[\$10(10800 + 45000) + \$2,212,500] =$$

$$\$10(10800 + 45000) + \$2,212,500 + 0$$

$$X10800 + \$675,000 + 1,847,000 = \$2,770,500 + 0$$

$$X10800 = \$2,770,500 - \$1,847,000 - \$675,000$$

$$X10800 = \$248,500$$

$$X = \$23 \text{ ROUNDED}$$

THEREFORE: The tuition for part-time students is $23 per credit hour.

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